

SAFE FOOD DIGESTS

Because Safe Food Saves Lives

Benton-Franklin Health District Food Safety Department



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Turkey Day Tips for Restaurants

For the Health District, "holidays" often means foodborne illness outbreaks. The Benton-Franklin Health District investigated two large foodborne norovirus outbreaks in 2019 and both occurred over a holiday weekend. During the holidays, large groups of people gather, coverage for ill food workers is often minimal, and special items may be added to the menu on the fly. Many food establishments choose to feature meals during the holidays that may not be a part of their regular menu. Make sure to check with your assigned inspector before adding specials that may be outside of your permit risk level. If you have been approved to add your holiday specials, then follow the quick tips on page two to make sure they are prepared safely.

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- **Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds** after handling any raw animal products to help prevent cross-contamination.
- **Temp your turkey!** Measure internal cooking temperatures of all proteins with a tip-sensitive digital thermometer. For safety, poultry should be cooked to a minimum of 165°F. Cook stuffing separately to prevent undercooking your bird. Red meat roasts should be cooked to 145°F for at least 4 minutes; a modified cooking chart, [found here](#), can be followed for meat roasts if you desire a medium rare product.
- **Do not work while ill!** Food workers who have been ill with vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours must stay home, as they are highly likely to be infectious. Meal service is often busy on holidays which increases your odds of spreading a foodborne illness--a holiday experience your customers aren't likely to forget.
- **Communicate with your inspector** if you plan to make changes. Any new menu items or changes in operation must be approved in advance. Connect with your local inspector using the Food Program contacts list found on Page 6.

Follow these quick tips to be sure holiday meals are served safely:

- **Thaw large proteins in the refrigerator.** Plan one day of thawing time for each 4-5 lb. of meat. For example, a 16 lb. turkey would require at least four days to thaw under refrigeration. See [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) for alternate ways to thaw large proteins.
- **Handle raw proteins carefully,** protecting surfaces from cross-contamination. Handle raw proteins on a dedicated cutting board and wash, rinse, and sanitize the surface after use. Washing meat or poultry is not recommended because you risk spreading germs around the kitchen.



For more information on holiday food safety and outbreaks, visit [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov), or call the Benton-Franklin Health District Food Safety Program at (509) 460-4205.

Spotlight on Date Marking

Food Code Revision 2020

In the **last issue of *Safe Food Digests***, we discussed the upcoming Food Code revision, which is underway now. The expected implementation date of the revised code is now September of 2020. In each issue of *SFD* we plan to highlight one specific rule change in-depth, starting with the upcoming requirement for date marking. Once the revised code is in effect, food establishments must begin date marking most foods in opened packages. Perishable, ready-to-eat foods in opened packages that will be held for more than 24 hours must have a date marked on the container, not to exceed seven days from opening the product. There will be exceptions to this rule for foods that are at low risk for growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*, a dangerous pathogen that can grow at refrigerated temperatures.



The following foods are expected to be exempt from the proposed date marking regulations:

- Non time-temperature control for safety (non-perishable) foods
- Foods in unopened, commercially sealed packages
- Foods that will be held in the food establishment for less than 24 hours
- Individual meal portions served or packaged for sale from a bulk container upon a consumer's request (e.g., portioned deli items served to order)
- *Commercially prepared* deli salads, like potato salad, macaroni salad, etc.
- Hard or semi-soft cheeses containing < 50% moisture (**see a list of exempt cheeses in Annex 3 of the 2017 FDA Food Code**)
- Cultured dairy products, such as yogurt, sour cream, or buttermilk
- Preserved or acidified fish products, such as pickled herring or salted cod
- Shelf-stable dry fermented sausages, such as pepperoni and Genoa.
- Shelf-stable salt-cured products, such as prosciutto and parma (ham)



For more information about date marking regulations, or the dangers of *Listeria monocytogenes*, you can read the **most current copy of the FDA Food Code**

Fighting Food Waste with Safe Food Donation



Food insecurity is a growing problem in the State of Washington

About 12% of people statewide and about 10% of people locally report that they suffer from food insecurity. Washington State recently passed legislation that set a statewide goal of reducing food waste by 50% by the year 2030. How can we at the local level help to contribute to a solution for decreasing food insecurity and waste? Licensed food establishments can choose to donate foods to the needy through local food rescue operations (called “donated food distributing organizations” in Washington), as long as those foods have been safely handled.



What type of food can a restaurant donate?

- Foods that have been properly temperature controlled and stored throughout service. Examples include meals that have been handled with barriers, held, cooked and cooled at proper temperatures.
- Unused packaged foods and produce.

What type of food cannot be donated?

- Home canned foods
- Canned foods in containers that are rusted or severely damaged.
- Distressed foods (such as from a fire, flood or prolonged storage).
- Infant formula that has passed its expiration date.

What will change in the 2020 food code revision?

- Food establishments may donate certain previously served foods, with an approved written plan.
- Food establishments must begin date marking perishable, ready-to-eat foods for donation.
- Raw, unpasteurized milk will not be allowed for donation.

Read more about food waste and opportunities to donate on Page 5



Fighting Food Waste

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Connect with Donation Partners

Most donated food distributing organizations prefer advance notice if a food establishment is going to drop off prepared foods. Some may have restrictions on certain foods or packaging standards that you can discuss with them ahead of time. The resources below can be used to connect nationally and locally with food rescue organizations.

- **Local and state organizations** such as Tri-Cities Food Bank, Second Harvest, and Northwest Harvest can be contacted for food donation. All will accept packaged "grocery-style" items and some will accept prepared foods if they are portioned for individual use.
- **Dial 2-1-1 or (877) 211-9274** for a toll-free alternative to connect with other community-based organizations and government agencies, including local food pantries.
- **Participate in gleaning.** Local organizations such as the locally-based Fields of Grace will glean house-grown produce and some, such as Second Harvest, will distribute unused produce to local food banks. Most local food banks will also directly accept donation of unused produce that is in good condition.
- **National online resources**, like the Food Donation Connection (www.foodtodonate.com) are used by several major retailers to arrange food collection.

Hunger Happens Locally

- 9.48% of Benton-Franklin County residents report food insecurity
- 844 calls were made into 211 for food insecurity in 2018
- 17% of low income families in Franklin County live more than a 1/2 mile from a supermarket



POLICY UPDATES: PROBATION

The 2019 BFHD Enforcement Policy was introduced in the **last issue of SFD**. With the 2019 policy update, BFHD began using a "probationary" status as a new enforcement tool for failed inspections. As a reminder, establishments that score 85 or more red violation points on any food safety inspection will be placed on probation for the duration of their next two routine inspections. During the probationary period, any inspections earning 85 or more red violation points will result in immediate closure of the food establishment.

Since the rollout of the new policy on July 1, 2019, 13 food establishments have been placed into probationary status. One food establishment was closed as a result of a repeated 85+ red violation point inspection while on probation. The establishment passed their follow-up inspection soon after reopening..



[Click here to access a full copy of the 2019 Food Safety Enforcement Policy.](#)

Questions?

Do you have questions about any of the articles or information you read today in this issue of *Safe Food Digests*? Please contact your Food Safety Department inspector and we would be happy to chat with you more!

Food Safety Program Contacts

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